



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

A stylized globe with a digital grid overlay, showing the continents of Australia and Indonesia in a glowing blue color. The background is dark blue with some light effects.

Department of Home Affairs submission to the Inquiry into the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia on Cooperation in the Field of Defence

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

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Introduction

The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) and the Australian Border Force (ABF) welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties Inquiry into the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia on Cooperation in the Field of Defence*.

Connection to Home Affairs and the ABF

The ABF, through Maritime Border Command (MBC), is Australia's lead agency on civil maritime security (CMS). MBC is responsible for countering the eight CMS threats in the Australian maritime domain: unauthorised maritime arrivals; prohibited imports and exports; illegal exploitation of natural resources; illegal activity in protected areas; compromise to biosecurity; maritime terrorism; piracy, robbery or violence at sea; and marine pollution. MBC is a joint agency task force of which the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is a key member.

The ADF ensures appropriate maritime and aerial assets are made available to assist the ABF in addressing the full range of CMS threats to Australia. The ADF also supports MBC through the employment of Regional Force Surveillance Group patrols force-assigned to ADF Joint Task Force (JTF) 639. The ADF provides force-assigned assets to ADF JTF 639.2 in support of ABF Operation Leedstrum and will support Operation Lunar, with both force elements conducting littoral patrols to detect both illegal foreign fishers and unauthorised maritime arrivals.

Australian vessels conduct visits to Indonesian ports for a range of reasons, including for refuelling purposes. Current agreements limit the amount of ADF port visits to one port visit per month.

Implications of the Treaty

Home Affairs and the ABF support the *Agreement between Australia and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia on Cooperation in the Field of Defence*.

Collaboration with Indonesian partner agencies is critical to successfully addressing the illegal foreign fishing threat, including through docking in Indonesian ports to effect the transfer of apprehended foreign fishers direct to Indonesian authorities. In December 2023, MBC interdicted four foreign fishing vessels which resulted in 36 illegal foreign fishers being detained on-board an MBC Vessel. On 9 January 2024, the 36 illegal foreign fishers were returned by an ABF vessel and handed over to local authorities in Kupang, Indonesia. This activity was undertaken in support of Australia's deterrence and enforcement response to the surge in illegal foreign fishing activity in Australian waters.

The treaty could enable the number of visits to Indonesia to be increased. Due to the geographical location of Indonesia, an option to refuel at an Indonesian port would enable greater maritime coverage within Australia's Maritime Domain. This would provide an enhanced ability to deploy vessels to Australia's Indian Ocean Territories. Consistent surveillance of this area is critical to the ABF's management of maritime threats.

Bilateral Maritime Security Relationship

Australia and Indonesia share a robust and long-standing maritime security partnership that plays a crucial role in addressing shared maritime challenges at our borders. MBC works closely with Indonesian agencies, particularly the Maritime Security Agency (BAKAMLA) and the Directorate General of Marine and Fisheries Resources Surveillance (PSDKP). These relationships enhance expertise and capability in both countries by enabling joint patrols, information sharing, and joint training.

Bilateral CMS fora and joint operations ensure continued advancement of the maritime security relationship.

Australia – Indonesia Civil Maritime Senior Officials Meeting

The Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) is the key bilateral forum of engagement between senior officers from ABF and BAKAMLA; this forum with BAKAMLA promotes and facilitates this cooperation. The ABF/BAKAMLA SOM is an annual bi-lateral meeting alternately hosted by the BAKAMLA Chief and the ABF Commissioner. A range of operational, cooperation and mutual support matters are discussed during this annual forum, setting broad direction for the coming year and beyond.

The next SOM is due to be held in Australia in 2025.

Indonesia–Australia Fisheries Surveillance Forum

The ABF together with PSDKP and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) co-chair the Indonesia–Australia Fisheries Surveillance Forum (IAFSF). The IAFSF was established in 2007 to provide focus on combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Australia’s northern waters. The IAFSF recognises the Joint Communique between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and Australia on *Cooperation to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and to Promote Sustainable Fisheries Governance* signed in Jakarta on 17 October 2015, as well as the Joint Declaration on *Maritime Cooperation*.

The last IAFSF was held on 2 May 2024 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The next IAFSF is due to be held in Darwin, Australia in February 2025.

Combined Coordination Group

The Combined Coordination Group (CCG) was established in October 2024 between the IAFSF co-chairs to:

- (i) drive on-water enforcement operations to detect, deter and disrupt illegal activity along the Indonesia-Australia shared maritime boundary
- (ii) improve maritime domain awareness between Indonesia and Australia through effective information sharing
- (iii) coordinate public information campaigns and outreach activities aimed at educating and deterring fishers from engaging in illegal activities
- (iv) identify opportunities for skills sharing and learning opportunities amongst Australian and Indonesian fisheries enforcement agencies.

The CCG is the working group which reports to the IAFSF.

The inaugural CCG meeting was held in Canberra in December 2024.

Operation Gannet

Operation Gannet (OP GANNET) is a coordinated maritime patrol between Australia and Indonesia, which was first staged in 2018 and involves ABF and AFMA working directly with BAKAMLA and PSDKP. The primary operational objectives for OP GANNET are to detect, deter and combat illegal activities at sea and to strengthen the cooperation and interoperability between the agencies involved. It enables cooperation between ABF, AFMA, BAKAMLA and PSDKP to combat shared maritime threats within an agreed maritime area of operation.

Port visits under OP GANNET is an opportunity to enhance the operational cooperation between the civil maritime agencies to target shared maritime threats along the Indonesia/Australia border. For the ABF, it is also an opportunity to amplify the deterrence messaging of heightened threats associated with the increased incursion of IUU fishing and the people smuggling threat in the region.

On 12 May 2024, during OP GANNET 2024, 36 illegal foreign fishers were apprehended and transferred to Indonesian authorities.

Operation Jawline-Arafura

Operation Jawline-Arafura (OP JAWLINE-ARAFURA) is a coordinated patrol activity between ABF, AFMA and PSDKP. OP JAWLINE-ARAFURA provides an important opportunity to strengthen coordinated Australia-Indonesia maritime security operations and generates a deterrence effect against illegal fishing.

The primary objective of OP JAWLINE-ARAFURA is to detect, deter, and respond to illegal maritime activities and safeguard maritime borders, and reinforces the importance of collaborative efforts.